

## Message Text

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ACTION IO-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AF-10 ARA-14 EA-12 EUR-12 NEA-10  
CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-02 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00  
NSC-05 PA-02 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-20 HA-05 OIC-02  
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R 291705Z AUG 78  
FM USMISSION USUN NEW YORK  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3028  
INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN  
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AMEMBASSY JAKARTA  
AMEMBASSY KABUL  
USINT HAVANA  
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW  
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI  
AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN  
USLO PEKING  
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE  
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO  
AMEMBASSY SOFIA  
AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM  
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AMEMBASSY TEHRAN  
AMEMBASSY TUNIS

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E.O. 11652: N/A  
TAGS: PORG, UNGA, PDEV, RQ  
SUBJECT: COMMITTEE OF 24 BEGINS CONSIDERATION OF  
PUERTO RICO

1. SUMMARY: THE COMMITTEE OF 24 (C-24) OPENED ITS CON-  
SIDERATION OF PUERTO RICO AUG 28 BY HEARING THE FIRST

SIX OF NUMEROUS "PETITIONERS". LEAD OFF SPEAKER WAS PUERTO RICAN GOVERNOR CARLOS ROMERO-BARCELO WHO INSISTED THAT THE PUERTO RICAN PEOPLE MUST REACH THE FINAL DECISION ON THEIR STATUS WITHOUT OUTSIDE INTERFERENCE. HE COMMITTED HIS ADMINISTRATION TO HOLDING A NEW STATUS PLEBISCITE FOLLOWING THE 1980 ELECTIONS AND INVITED DELEGATES OF ALL MEMBER COUNTRIES OF THE C-24 TO VISIT PUERTO RICO TO INVESTIGATE FIRSTHAND THE CAPACITY OF THE PEOPLE TO EXERCISE THEIR INALIENABLE RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION. HE DISPARAGED "SEPARATISTS" IN PUERTO RICO WHO, REPEATEDLY REPUDIATED AT THE POLLS, SOUGHT THE ASSISTANCE OF CUBA TO URGE UN INTERVENTION IN PUERTO RICO'S INTERNAL AFFAIRS. FORMER GOVERNOR RAFAEL HERNANDEZ COLON ALSO DEFENDED THE RIGHT OF THE PUERTO RICAN PEOPLE TO DETERMINE THEIR DESTINY BUT WONDERED IF THAT RIGHT WAS GUARANTEED UNDER PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES. HE SUGGESTED THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY MIGHT ASK THE US WHAT MEASURES HAD BEEN TAKEN TO UPHOLD THE PEOPLE'S WILL. THE OTHER FOUR SPEAKERS - JUAN GARCIA-PASSALACQUA (AMERICANS FOR DEMOCRATIC ACTION), PUERTO RICAN SENATOR ORESTE RAMOS, MIAMI MAYOR MAURICE FERRE, AND MAUREEN BERMAN (INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS) - ARGUED THAT PUERTO RICO HAS NOT ATTAINED FULL SELF-GOVERNMENT AND SUPPORTED C-24 COMPETENCE TO KEEP THE SITUATION THERE UNDER REVIEW. CUBAN AMB ROA CONCLUDED THE MEETING WITH AN ATTACK ON GOV ROMERO FOR HAVING "BETRAYED" THE PEOPLE OF UNCLASSIFIED

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PUERTO RICO, A "COLONY" THAT SOONER OR LATER WOULD BE INDEPENDENT. END SUMMARY.

2. AT THE C-24'S FIRST MEETING ON PUERTO RICO AUG 28, THE FIRST "PETITIONER" TO BE HEARD WAS GOV CARLOS ROMERO-BARCELO, THE FIRST GOV OF PUERTO RICO TO ADDRESS THE C-24. HE POINTED OUT THAT SINCE 1953 WHEN PUERTO RICO HAD BEEN REMOVED BY GA RESOLUTION FROM THE LIST OF NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES FIVE DIFFERENT GOVERNORS OF TWO DIFFERENT PARTIES HAD BEEN ELECTED. NONE HAD COME BEFORE THE UNITED NATIONS CONCERNING ANY ASPECT OF THE ISLAND'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE US; ALL HAD ESPOUSED THE PRINCIPLE OF PERMANENT UNION WITH THE US. HE REMARKED THAT DISCUSSIONS IN THE C-24 WERE HELD AT THE BEHEST OF AN ADVERSARY OF THE US, IN SUPPORT OF A POLITICAL FACTION IN PUERTO RICO "WHOSE ELECTORAL STRENGTH HAS REMAINED AT LESS THAN SEVEN PERCENT FOR TWO DECADES", GOV ROMERO-BARCELO SAID THAT, ALTHOUGH THERE IS NO AGREEMENT ON PUERTO RICO'S ULTIMATE STATUS AMONG ITS FIVE ELECTED GOVERNORS, ALL AGREE THAT THE PEOPLE MUST DECIDE INDEPENDENTLY IF THE DECISION IS TO BE VALID AND BINDING. HE HAD COME TO ADDRESS THE C-24, HE SAID, NOT TO REQUEST

INTERVENTION BUT TO EXPLAIN WHY IT SHOULD NOT CONSIDER  
INTERVENING. IF HE WERE RE-ELECTED IN 1980 HOLDING OF  
A NEW STATUS PLEBISCITE WOULD BE "A FIRM COMMITMENT" OF  
HIS ADMINISTRATION. HE ALSO INVITED MEMBERS OF THE  
COMMITTEE TO VISIT THE ISLAND AND INVESTIGATE  
FIRST HAND THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE PUERTO RICAN PEOPLE  
ARE ABLE TO EXERCISE THEIR INALIENABLE RIGHT TO SELF-  
DETERMINATION. IF THE DAY EVER CAME THAT THEY FELT  
THEMSELVES OPPRESSED BY THE US, "IT WOULD NOT BE  
NECESSARY FOR A TOTALITARIAN ADVERSARY OF THE US TO  
BRING THE MATTER TO THE ATTENTION OF THE C-24"; THEY  
WOULD BRING IT TO THE UN THEMSELVES. HE REMAINED

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CONFIDENT, HOWEVER, THAT THIS WOULD NEVER BE NECESSARY, DESPITE OCCASIONAL FAULTS THE US HAD BEEN FAIR IN ITS RELATIONS WITH THE "AMERICAN CITIZENS" OF PUERTO RICO. HE CONCLUDED WITH STRONG CRITICISM OF THE "SEPARATIST FORCES" WHO, AFTER REJECTION BY THE VOTERS IN PUERTO RICO, SOUGHT SUPPORT OUTSIDE IN DISREGARD OF THE PRINCIPLE OF SELF-DETERMINATION.

3. IN A BRIEF STATEMENT, FORMER GOV RAFAEL HERNANDEZ COLON SUPPORTED THE RIGHT OF THE PEOPLE OF PUERTO RICO TO CHOOSE THE KIND OF POLITICAL STATUS THEY WISHED. IN RESOLUTION 748 OF 1953 THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY HAD RECOGNIZED THE FREE ASSOCIATED STATUS THAT THE PEOPLE OF PUERTO RICO HAD CHOSEN. "ACTING UNILATERALLY", HE WENT ON, PRESIDENT FORD HAD PROPOSED TO CONGRESS THE GRANTING OF STATEHOOD TO PUERTO RICO, "A CLEAR VIOLATION OF THE RIGHT OF SELF-DETERMINATION" OF THE PUERTO RICANS. THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION HAS FORMALLY RECOGNIZED SELF-DETERMINATION, HE NOTED, BUT A PLEBISCITE "FOR STATEHOOD" HAS BEEN DECLARED FOR 1981. HE WONDERED IN PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES IF THE RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION OF THE PUERTO RICAN PEOPLE WAS SAFELY GUARANTEED. THE WILL OF THE PEOPLE SHOULD BE FULLY RESPECTED, GOV COLON DECLARED. THE STATUS OF FREE ASSOCIATION COULD BE MODIFIED IF NECESSARY TO MEET THEIR WILL. HE CONCLUDED BY SUGGESTING THAT THE GA MIGHT ASK THE US TO INFORM IT WHAT MEASURES HAD BEEN TAKEN IN PUERTO RICO TO UPHOLD THE WILL OF THE PEOPLE.

4. JUAN M. GARCIA-PASSALACQUA, COUNSEL OF THE PUERTO RICO CHAPTER OF AMERICANS FOR DEMOCRATIC ACTION, APPEARED FOR THE SECOND YEAR "TO INSIST THAT THE C-24 ASSUME JURISDICTION OVER PUERTO RICO THIS YEAR ON THE  
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BASIS OF RESOLUTIONS 1514 AND 1541". HE CLAIMED THAT RES 748 (WHICH REMOVED PUERTO RICO FROM THE LIST OF NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES) WAS NO LONGER IN

FORCE" AS PUERTO RICO OF 1978 IS DIFFERENT FROM THAT OF 1953". HE URGED THAT PUERTO RICO BE PUT BACK ON THE LIST, AN "OBSERVATION PROCESS" BE STARTED AND THE MATTER KEPT UNDER REVIEW.

5. SENATOR ORESTE RAMOS, CHAIRMAN OF THE GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS COMMITTEE OF THE PUERTO RICAN SENATE, GAVE A LENGTHY AND DETAILED HISTORICAL REVIEW OF US LEGISLATION GOVERNING ITS RELATIONS WITH PUERTO RICO. HE AFFIRMED THAT PUERTO RICO IS AND HAS BEEN SINCE 1898, A "TERRITORY OF POSSESSION" SUBJECT TO THE UNILATERAL AND UNCONSULTED SOVEREIGNTY OF THE US CONGRESS. IN 1953 THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY HAD "MISTAKENLY, FROM THE LEGAL POINT OF VIEW" STATED THAT THE PUERTO RICANS HAD EXERCISED THEIR RIGHT OF SELF-DETERMINATION IN CHOOSING COMMON-WEALTH STATUS. THE BASIC REQUIREMENTS FOR FREE ASSOCIATION HAD NOT BEEN COMPLIED WITH, HE DECLARED. THE US COULD NOT CEDE ITS SOVEREIGNTY OVER PUERTO RICO, HE SAID, UNLESS PUERTO RICO ACHIEVED STATEHOOD OR INDEPENDENCE. MR. RAMOS SAID THAT HE FAVORED STATEHOOD AS THE BEST SOLUTION FOR PUERTO RICO'S LEGAL AND POLITICAL PROBLEMS.

6. MAURICE A. FERRE, MAYOR OF MIAMI, WHO DESCRIBED HIMSELF AS A NATIVE OF PUERTO RICO, A DEMOCRAT, AND A SUPPORTER OF PRESIDENT CARTER AND PRESIDENT CARTER'S HUMAN RIGHTS PROGRAM, REITERATED THE VIEW HE EXPRESSED LAST YEAR THAT PUERTO RICO HAS NOT ACHIEVED A FULL MEASURE OF SELF-GOVERNMENT. THIS VIEW, HE REMARKED, WAS IN SHARP CONTRAST WITH THE CLAIM OF THE STATE DEPARTMENT

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AND THE US PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE TO THE UNITED NATIONS "WHO I ASSUME WILL BE TRYING TO DELAY YOUR VOTE ON PUERTO RICO ONCE MORE THIS YEAR." INDEPENDENCE WAS NOT THE ONLY OPTION AVAILABLE, HE OBSERVED. THERE WAS ALSO THE "EQUALITY AND DIGNITY" OF STATEHOOD. HE URGED THE COMMITTEE TO RETURN PUERTO RICO TO THE LIST OF COLONIES "TO AWAKEN THE US CONGRESS AND THE PEOPLE OF PUERTO RICO TO THE REALITY OF PUERTO RICO". AT THE SAME TIME HE WARNED THAT ANY ATTEMPT TO DICTATE A SOLUTION TO PUERTO RICO'S POLITICAL STATUS QUESTION WOULD BE MET WITH JUSTIFIABLE DEFIANCE.

7. MISS MAUREEN R. BERMAN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, SAID THAT THE QUESTION BEFORE THE COMMITTEE WAS "QUITE SIMPLE AND STRAIGHTFORWARD", WHOULD PUERTO RICO BE ADDED TO THE LIST OF NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES. SHE FELT THAT IT SHOULD "AS EVERY MAJOR POLITICAL GROUP" IN PUERTO RICO AGREED THAT IT HAD NOT YET ATTAINED A "FULL MEASURE OF SELF-GOVERNMENT". THIS NEED NOT BE INTERPRETED AS A CONDEMNATION OF US POLICY, SHE SAID, BUT AS REFLECTING THE FACT THAT ALL POLITICAL GROUPS IN PUERTO RICO NOW SOUGHT SOME CHANGE IN THE CURRENT POLITICAL STATUS. THE LEAGUE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS HOPED THAT THE US WOULD WELCOME

A UNITED NATIONS ROLE WHEN A PLEBISCITE WAS HELD.

8. CONCLUDING THE SESSION, CUBAN PERMREP RAUL ROA-KOURI, SHARPLY ATTACKED GOV ROMERO-BARCELO AS A MAN WHO HAD BETRAYED THE PUERTO RICAN PEOPLE AND USED HIS POSITION AS A "COLONIAL" GOVERNOR TO SUPPORT THE US. HE WAS NOT A LATIN AMERICAN BUT A "YANKEE" AND HAD NO RIGHT TO REFER TO CUBAN POLICY IN DEROGATORY TERMS.

9. THE COMMITTEE WILL CONTINUE HEARING PETITIONERS AT UNCLASSIFIED

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ITS NEXT MEETING, AUG 29 AT 3:00 PM. LEONARD

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## Message Attributes

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**TAGS:** PORG, PDEV, RQ, UNGA, COMMITTEE OF 24  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
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